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# 1. Language contact research: scope, trends, and possible future directions

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## 1. Introduction

Almost a quarter century ago, Mouton published a massive two-volume set called *Kontaktlinguistik / Contact Linguistics / Linguistique de Contact* (Goebel et al. 1996, 1997). The book you are reading now builds on that foundation, but even as we ‘stand on the shoulders of giants’, the field has progressed so rapidly and changed so dramatically that these two handbooks represent two fundamentally different books about very different fields. The present volume is not really a new edition of Volume 1 of the 1996 handbook in any sense, but instead a fresh collection on the same topic. This introduction provides a brief comparison of the two projects and situates the present volume in a broader context.

As pointed out by Oksaar (1996: 2), language contact phenomena have been “perceived and discussed in their various applied aspects throughout the history of Europe”, and of course far beyond. The emergence of language contact as an area of scientific interest, however, basically dates back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Hesselink, Paul, Schuchardt, Whitney, and others developed an interest in dialect contact, pidgin and creole formation, and the roles of lexical, phonological, and syntactic transfer in language change (Clyne 1975, 1987; Winford 2007: 22). Also important to the later development of research on the linguistic consequences of contact between people and social groups was the work of Georg Schmidt-Rohr, Heinz Kloss, and other representatives of the *Auslandsdeutsche Volksforschung*, though Clyne (1987: 456) reminds us with reference to the work of Schmidt-Rohr that this work was “steeped in the racist ideology of National Socialism”; see also Hutton (1999). The bibliographies of Weinreich’s ([1953] 1968) *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* and Haugen’s ([1953] 1969) *The Norwegian Language in America* offer broad samples of early literature on intra- and extralinguistic language contact phenomena. During the time of the emergence of what Voegelin (s.d.) called ‘hyphenated linguistics’, both monographs are also generally considered to have sparked more systematic study of language contact phenomena (Matras 2009: 1). Particularly Weinreich’s (1968) volume continues to inspire contemporary specialists, for example, Lim and Ansaldo (2016: 187–190).

Less discussed in recent literature, but an equally important source of inspiration for the present volume, is Mackey’s (1976) *Bilinguisme et Contact des Langues*. The work of Mackey and his colleagues at the University of Laval’s International Center for Research on Bilingualism inspired Nelde’s (1980, 1983) take on language contact. As a consequence, it also had an influence on the scope and the structure of the 12<sup>th</sup> volume in De Gruyter’s HSK-Series mentioned just above: the international and trilingual (English-

French-German) handbook on *Contact Linguistics*, edited by Peter H. Nelde (who acted as lead editor) together with Hans Goebel, Zdeněk Starý, and Wolfgang Wölck and published in 1996 (Volume 1) and 1997 (Volume 2). Thomason (2001: 13) refers to the handbook as a “major [...] encyclopedic treatment of the subject”. Rindler Schjerve (1999: 8) sees it as offering “an ultimate synthesis of contact linguistic endeavours”. While this might be an overstatement, it cannot be denied that the thematic coverage of the field offered in the first, theoretical volume of *Contact Linguistics* is vastly broader than that offered in other, more recently published monographs and handbooks on language contact. At the time of this writing, the field has a rapidly growing set of handbooks beyond the original Mouton project, including Hickey (2013, new edition in preparation), Grant (forthcoming), and Mufwene and Escobar (in preparation), as well as textbooks and journals.

As will become clear in Section 2 of this introduction, the structure of and philosophy behind the 1996 volume have inspired the present volume in many ways. Section 3 is devoted to some current trends in language contact research. Section 4 closes with potential directions for future research.

## 2. Scope

Matras (2009: 1) lists borrowing, areal language clusters, new ‘contact’ languages, pidgins and creoles, and code-switching as topics that receive especially extensive attention in recent publications on language contact. Those are, for example, topics that are dealt with frequently in the *Journal of Language Contact* (JLC), a thriving platform for language contact research established by Robert Nicolai in 2007. As stated on the journal’s website, JLC particularly aims at “advancing our understanding of the nature of language” (<https://brill.com/view/journals/jlc/jlc-overview.xml>), which almost automatically entails a focus on the structural linguistic consequences of language contact rather than on speakers and social groups as the loci of language contact. In the opening article of the first issue, Nicolai (2007: 17) does, however, point to the variety of intersecting angles from which language contact phenomena are or can be studied. In doing so, he refers to Winford’s (2007: 22) view that “[t]he earliest conceptions of the field of Contact Linguistics envisioned it as a multi-disciplinary area of study, encompassing a broad range of language contact phenomena and issues, linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociological and psycholinguistic”. That is indeed what emerged early on in the preface of *The Norwegian Language in America*, in which Haugen (1969: xi) writes: “It has been my intention throughout this book to treat language as a social phenomenon, in such a way that it might offer something of value to students of history and sociology”. This is also the vision that Weinreich (1968: 4) presents in the first chapter of *Languages in Contact*:

Purely linguistic studies of languages in contact must be coordinated with extra-linguistic studies on bilingualism and related phenomena. Geographers and ethnographers have described bilingual populations; sociologists have examined the functioning of coexisting languages in a community; jurists have studied the legal status accorded to minority languages in various states; the inquiries of educators interested in bilingual children and in foreign-language teaching have stimulated psychologists to analyze the effects of bilingualism on personality. All the studies are described in a vast, scattered literature. But divergent as

they are in purpose and scope, they are all essentially complementary in understanding a phenomenon of so many dimensions.

Work on language change, and linguistic theory more broadly, has long wrestled with how to put material into discrete boxes of ‘internal’ versus ‘external’ motivations, i.e. structural versus social. These passages show that work on language contact has engaged with the problem in a more holistic way, increasingly avoiding what Dorian (1993: 152) calls “the weakness of simplistic dichotomous thinking”. In this regard, other subfields of linguistics are finally catching up with language contact studies.

The broad, inclusive take on language contact research just sketched is reflected in the many working papers and publications of the International Center for Research on Bilingualism (1967–2001; known from 1990 onward as the Centre international de Recherche sur l’Aménagement linguistique), as well as in the 30 volumes of the *Plurilingua* series published by the Brussels-based Research Center on Multilingualism (1977–2007). The content of these publications can be classified according to the interrelated main foci of research on language contact identified by Clyne (1975, 1996), Mackey (1976), and Nelde (1992), namely: language, individual language user(s), and society. In line with this view, the first three sections of the present volume focus on these three areas, while the final two turn to issues of methodology and connections to neighboring disciplines.

**Section 1** focuses on linguistic aspects of language contact, and contains ten chapters covering contact-induced change from a general point of view (Chapter 2), contact-induced syntactic change (Chapter 3), contact-induced semantic change (Chapter 4), lexicon and word formation (Chapter 5), morphology (Chapter 6), orthography and graphemics (Chapter 7), levels of representation in phonetic and phonological contact (Chapter 8), pidginization and creolization (Chapter 9), varieties in contact (Chapter 10), and constructed languages (Chapter 11).

**Section 2** deals with language contact and the individual. Its ten chapters focus on pragmatic aspects of language contact (Chapter 12), borrowing (Chapter 13), code-switching (Chapter 14), age groups (Chapter 15), uninstructed language acquisition in multiple language learners (Chapter 16), first language attrition (Chapter 17), individual variation in bilingual lexical processing (Chapter 18), metalinguistic awareness and multilingual development (Chapter 19), language attitudes (Chapter 20), and gender (Chapter 21).

**Section 3** covers societal aspects of language contact. It starts with chapters on multilingualism (Chapter 22), geographical and social boundaries (Chapter 23), language and identity (Chapter 24), and language ideology (Chapter 25). It further contains chapters on the notion of speech community (Chapter 26), on urban and rural language contact (Chapter 27), globalization and superdiversity (Chapter 28), states, nations, and language contact (Chapter 29), language politics, policy, and planning (Chapter 30), majorities and minorities in language policy and language rights (Chapter 31), and language standardization (Chapter 32). It ends with chapters on domains of language use (Chapter 33), education (Chapter 34), media (Chapter 35), linguistic landscapes (Chapter 36), language shift (Chapter 37), and language maintenance (Chapter 38).

Organizing these chapters into these three sections with a focus on language, individual language user(s), and society seemed more straightforward than trying to force the chapters into the structure of 1996’s Volume 1, which contained sections on: levels of linguistics

tic structure (Section III; 8 chapters), external research (Section IV; 6 chapters), basic approaches to contact linguistics (Section V; 17 chapters), central issues in contact linguistics (Section VI; 45 chapters), and applied contact linguistics (Section VIII; 15 chapters).

The earlier Volume 1 also contains a section on empirical methods and procedures (Section VII; 13 chapters), on which we modeled the empirical section of the present volume. Yet we have chosen to include more specific (rather than more general) methodological chapters.

**Section 4**, on methodological issues, contains two broad introductory chapters on quantitative (Chapter 39) and qualitative analysis (Chapter 40) of language contact data. It also contains two overview chapters written by social scientists on surveys (Chapter 41) and the representativeness of samples (Chapter 42), which also serve as background for a chapter offering a broad introduction to the geolinguistic analysis of demolinguistic data (Chapter 43). Furthermore, this section contains chapters on domain analysis (Chapter 44), ways to establish a sociology-of-language framework to compare minority languages (Chapter 45), social network analysis (Chapter 46), nexus analysis (Chapter 47), ethnography (Chapter 48), interviewing (Chapter 49), participant observation (Chapter 50), discourse analysis (Chapter 51), corpus linguistic methods (Chapter 52), psycholinguistic methods (Chapter 53), and research ethics (Chapter 54).

Inspired by Section II (9 chapters) of the 1996 handbook, the present volume also contains a number of chapters that offer a more ‘external linguistic take’ on the study of language contact phenomena.

**Section 5** treats robust interactions with neighboring disciplines from the perspective of anthropology (Chapter 55), colonial studies (Chapter 56), economics (Chapter 57), educational sciences (Chapter 58), legal studies (Chapter 59), literary studies (Chapter 60), media and communication studies (Chapter 61), political science (Chapter 62), social psychology (Chapter 63), and translation studies (Chapter 64).

The chapters have been ordered simply by our sense of what might work for someone reading cover-to-cover, in the unlikely event that someone would actually do that. The exception is Section 5, which, as an overview of neighboring disciplines, was ordered alphabetically by field of study. Since all chapters are encyclopedic, stand-alone chapters, they can be read separately, and it will make sense to read them in various orders depending on the goals and background of the reader. Thematically related chapters in Sections 1–3 do create potentially useful clusters of chapters. Section 1, for example, contains a number of related chapters on structural aspects of contact-induced change (Chapters 2, 3, and 4). We can also imagine value in a ‘combined reading’ of the chapters on urban and rural language contact (Chapter 27), globalization and superdiversity (Chapter 28), and states, nations, and language contact (Chapter 29).

While we have tried to offer our readers a volume which is both condensed and comprehensive, with theoretical chapters on a great variety of language contact phenomena, there are gaps. Section 1 was supposed to contain a chapter on sign languages, and Section 2 chapters on language contact and the brain, intercultural communication, and multiliteracies. For Section 3, we had planned a chapter on migration, *Abstand* and *Ausbau*, and language conflict (given the inextricable relationship between language

contact and language conflict as expressed in Nelde's Law: there is no contact without conflict, Nelde 1987). Section 4 should have included a chapter on neurolinguistic methods, and Section 5 a chapter on history and a chapter on sociology. These gaps result from the usual academic and nonacademic 'facts of life', ranging from administrative duties that made it impossible to deliver on time, unforeseen dramatic personal circumstances, and our decision to give priority to the timely publication of the project rather than allowing a long postponement in the name of creating a more complete volume. While we will weave these missing topics into the second volume of this handbook, there is, of course, enough literature out there today that readers can consult to see the state of the art on these matters. The 1996 volume on *Contact Linguistics* provides an easy point of departure, one that has stood the test of time. Yet it is also clear that new trends have come into being, a topic to which we now turn.

### 3. Trends

As editors, we happily refrain from the common practice of summarizing individual chapter content to introduce a volume like this, but instead take the opportunity to offer a 'snapshot in action' of ongoing changes in our field of inquiry, to assess its vitality and agility, and to testify to its methodological innovations, engagement with societal change at large, and manifold interactions with neighboring disciplines.

To this end, we highlight a number of trends that consistently manifested themselves across chapters in the major sections, both as marked progress from the previous HSK handbook on contact linguistics and as harbingers for key future research directions. Above all, we underscore how profoundly different the field is today as compared to only a few years ago on every relevant parameter, from new amounts and kinds of data, to new theories about language structure and social dimensions of language, to methods and topics of research.

#### 3.1. Linguistic aspects of language contact

The past two decades have witnessed a major leap in the study of structural aspects of language contact. Our understanding of contact-induced change has substantially deepened, regarding both contact in the distant past and change now in progress, and especially of the latter, driven by the rise of language variation and change as a field and inspired by Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968). Synchronic and diachronic approaches have enhanced one another. The massive increase in available evidence, as well as methodological innovations allowing for more refined analyses of these data, have led to increased insights into the (ir)regularity of language change, allowing (among many other things) for more refined models of contact-induced change, far beyond the 1996 canon. Growing attention to the distinct processes of 'matter' and 'pattern' borrowing is but one illustration of this epistemological progress.

The basic theoretical underpinnings of grammar (be it phonology, morphology, or syntax) are increasingly tightly woven into the fabric of language contact theory proper, offering insights into grammatical contact effects that can be directly applied to both the

conversational role and the language proficiency of the individual speaker in a given interaction. The landscape in grammatical theory has itself been transformed since the original volumes appeared; while the Contrastive Hierarchy in phonology and Minimalism in syntax were only emerging 20–25 years ago, they are central to some discussions in this volume. The systematic study of semantic change (aside from grammaticalization and related research) barely existed in some sense, but has boomed recently, opening new avenues in the understanding of the ‘mechanics’ of linguistic systemic convergence and of the societal and cognitive practices involved.

All of these evolving insights into the structural properties of language contact in the strictest grammatical sense have in particular informed (and apparently also created new momentum in) the study of contact varieties and contact languages. This obviously holds true for the processes of pidginization and creolization, but also for other emerging ‘mixed’ varieties. Universal second-language acquisition strategies are now instrumentalized, for example, to account for current developments in creoles, complementing traditional work on (de)creolization or substrate effects. We note a major shift from purely systemic to more inclusion of sociohistorical and usage-based criteria. The integration of sociocultural (and other extralinguistic) practices in the study of writing systems for these languages exemplifies this evolution, and provides telling evidence of the growing integration of purely linguistic dimensions of language contact studies with the role of the individual speaker in the process.

### 3.2. Language contact and the individual

The chapters in this volume make many clear and convincing cases for a shift in the study of the role of the individual language user in language contact situations, both complementing and rivaling the impressive progress made regarding the systemic aspects proper of language contact. Compared to 1996, the notion of the ‘multilingual repertoire’ now dominates the multidisciplinary assessment of language use in interaction. Ethnographic and anthropological perspectives on 21<sup>st</sup> century communication seem to have inspired a widespread, and well-received, urge for terminological innovation when describing and categorizing the individual’s variety choices in distinct settings.

The present volume bears witness to this new mainstream discourse with ample reference to an elaborate corpus of vogue terms, including *superdiversity*, *polylinguaging*, *translinguaging*, or even plain *linguaging*. The chapters where these concepts are used to both reappraise and reframe dimensions of linguistic contact together present a concise overview of the potential longevity and impact of this rejuvenated jargon, well beyond the ideology-laden contexts where it appears as a fixed asset.

While the intricacies and added value of these new labels lead the initiated to a deeper understanding of previously unfathomed dimensions of contact, we as editors were nevertheless struck by the sheer amount of effort and explanation required to enlighten the linguistic community at large about the relevant differences separating two terminological generations. Looking towards the potential third incarnation of this handbook in a decade or two from now, we marvel at the outcome of this terminological inflation, as more eloquently and elaborately explicated by Pavlenko (2018), Grin (2018), and Meyerhoff (2019: 136–137), to name but a few.

A river of present-day scholarship foregrounds ideologies, attitudes, and agency – whether linguistic or not – that control and shape shifts in speakers’ repertoires, turning conversation in contact situations into a sequence of enactment and performance, with the individual speaker as a continuously stimulated actor responding to highly context-specific impulses.

While the appeal of the new in some cases tends to eclipse (or depreciate) terms from the traditional sociolinguistic canon, like ‘code-switching’ and ‘transfer’, this transparent classic terminology also saw continued refinement, appealing to new developments in the neighboring disciplines of sociology and psychology.

As opposed to this terminological modernism, the study of language acquisition proper saw substantial advancement through the full integration of psycholinguistic insights and experimental methods. The emergence of longitudinal studies over the lifespan, the further exploration of instructed versus uninstructed acquisition, and the study of cross-linguistic factors in language loss and attrition are just a few of the many innovations that led to deeper understanding of language learning in contact situations. These insights now also inform new approaches to the study of systemic language change at large, and at the same time, re-dynamize scholarship on the societal aspects of language contact.

### 3.3. Societal aspects of language contact

It comes as no surprise that the reach and impact of the ‘language ideological turn’ transcended the domain of personal multilingualism, and percolated steadily into the study of societal aspects of language contact over the past two-plus decades. The super-diversity paradigm informs many new contributions to this field, indeed, even if it sometimes appears to border on infatuation. Classic methodological categories and terminology are in constant flux, as the locus of research shifts from languages and their communities of users to the ways in which these are embodied, created, and manipulated. Identity creation, stance-taking, and other forms of speaker agency are now at the heart of societal contact studies, in a clear shift away from more traditional concepts of distinct speech communities with clearly defined properties. The multilayered, quicksilver linguistic identity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century speaker is mirrored in a conceptualization of language communities which continuously adapt and change according to a multitude of social stimuli. Increased migration and globalization are most certainly the first among equals in this respect: whilst to the historically informed observer, current migration patterns may not be as novel as they are sometimes presented as being, this mobility is definitely the best attested and easiest to trace ever, including also in terms of its linguistic effects. We may, in other words, be in the most privileged position ever as linguists to observe, analyze, and contextualize processes of change ‘in action’ during the contact process. Whether approached from an ethnographic or anthropological perspective, relatively straightforward models of language communities gave way to the concept of a ‘pixelated’ society, with individuals that permanently redefine their (linguistic) position and nature. Bridging this collection of micro-studies of hyper-individual variation to a solid and relevant assessment of macro-level change remains a challenge. Interest in stance-taking and sociopolitical agency among scholars in this new playing field enhances the



position of the observing and analyzing linguist with a 'critical' guise, and certainly adds an extra layer to the defeat.

An equally influential transformation touches upon the very nature of language contact itself. The tsunami of 'new' internet-based media is changing our conception of communication, to the extent that language contact no longer requires the co-occurring physical presence of speakers. As such, the nature of processes of societal language attrition and loss, traditionally established in a context of actual real-life encounter and/or withdrawal, has been reconceptualized. It would be an oversimplification to state that speakers nowadays are in constant contact due to the inescapable intrusiveness of the internet beyond their own will; yet technological advancements may have had their biggest impact, so far, when it comes to facilitating and simplifying worldwide contact between language users.

On the other hand, given that only roughly half of the world's population has internet access, ethical considerations on a divide between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' can complement the observation that the more traditional approaches to language contact may still be applicable, and should not be discarded for some time to come.

### 3.4. Methodological issues

The great strides in linguistic methods generally are obvious enough, especially in the rapidly increasing quantitative and qualitative sophistication of the whole field, including in language contact studies. Those methods are now more varied and sophisticated than ever, and are applied across the whole gamut of available data, whether spoken, written, or signed, in both experimental and real-life settings.

The old dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative perspectives has given way to a set of combined-methods approaches, incorporating the best of both worlds to better understand how language contact works, and getting rid of the clichéd opposition between 'subjective' micro-studies and 'objective' figure-based macro-surveys. As a consequence, quantitative techniques themselves are now also a subject of qualitative consideration, including the ideological caveats inherent to specific methodologies. Accordingly, a persistent concern for the ethical dimensions of methodological choices has now become an acquired feature of research design. The clustering of analytical frameworks from various neighboring disciplines is one creative solution used to navigate possible pitfalls in this respect.

There is no doubt either that the material we work with has gotten substantially better as well. If the sheer amount of additional data available compared to the mid-1990s changed the scene, the organized ways in which this data is now available to researchers give an unprecedented boost to the field. To mention but one obvious example, corpus data and other large datasets make statistical analyses possible that could not be done with the far smaller amounts of data many early studies were built upon. Technological innovation was the driving force both enabling the compilation and facilitating the increasingly powerful manipulation of these 'big data', from high-level supercomputing to day-to-day routine data processing on commonly available and omnipresent devices.

These methodological and technical revolutions have had salient effects for all to see in a wide range of applications. The fine-grained mapping and monitoring of linguistic

diversity not only gathered momentum (and especially so in sensitive or traditional areas of language contact), but also had decisive impact on political and societal decisions relating to the communities concerned. Advances in imaging techniques have revolutionized the study of language processing, with impressive applications in healthcare and clinical research, but with equally groundbreaking progress in the psycho- and neurolinguistics of language contact.

These new horizons in subject matter (data) and subject method (analytical techniques) will shape the field in the years to come. We have included chapters and discussions on these, but also on traditional concerns, stretching back to domain analysis. As noted above, the input from non-linguists in these discussions is much valued and vitally important, underscoring our methodological connections to allied disciplines.

### 3.5. Interactions with neighboring disciplines

While language contact studies are defined by interaction, exchange of information, and an integration in society at large, the discipline itself can only realize these properties in dialogue with neighboring fields of inquiry. No matter how fascinating the massive changes may have been over the past 25 years in the splendid isolation of our profession, the reality check for any of these should also be assessed by its reception across the humanities and social sciences, and increasingly across the rest of the scientific enterprise, such as biology and mathematics.

The role of languages-in-contact as a key factor of social identity has been overtly embraced by adjacent disciplines, including the speaker's autonomous capacity to reposition and redefine this very identity through linguistic variation. The multilingual and multimodal individual has by default become a core unit of analysis. The accompanying discourse on translanguaging may not (yet) pervade all of these proximate subject areas, but intergroup dynamics are – at least partially – increasingly analyzed along with individual linguistic profiling of the group members.

This observation extends to the scholar, in what seems to be the definitive embodiment of the 'linguistic' turn in the humanities over the previous century. While the fact that the medium of language colors the nature of scholarly opinions and views has been common core for decades, recent scholarship now redefines the complex relationships between researchers and their subject matters from the perspective of their meta-identity as active language users who are prone to all of the 'linguaging' strategies discussed above.

Many other dimensions of the (socio)cognitive paradigm that have reinvigorated our discipline are now being equally applied in contact-related studies outside of the strictly linguistic sphere. A focus on language and diversity, and the possible societal and political consequences of linguistic inequality and/or injustice, now also informs much of the sociology- and education-related research in the social sciences writ large. A discourse of empowerment takes center stage in these disciplines, too, one which refers to language contact effects and is similar to the agency-driven positioning in contact linguistics discussed earlier.

The exponential spread of language contact through the 'digital revolution' is touched upon in various other domains. Considerations of both the strengthening and weakening effects of technology on minority groups, the spread of (language) ideologies through

technological innovation, and the default state of 24/7 connectedness have sparked scientific ambitions and concerns that both mirror those voiced by the contributors to this volume, and also guarantee an interdisciplinary interest in ongoing collaboration with contact linguists.

Overall, we see a pressing shared concern for the cultivation and preservation of a diverse language ecology worldwide, including the tension between maximizing personal expression, resisting commodification, and policing the fragile equilibrium between dominant and marginalized voices.

#### 4. Possible future directions

If the next decades bring changes to our understanding of language contact of the magnitude we have witnessed since the original handbook, all bets are off about where the field will be. Predicting the precise paths of progress in distinct domains and on specific topics is tricky for any scholar, but it feels safe to say that the major trends affecting the daily lives of our speakers – be they political, societal, cultural, natural, or technological – will have an impact on language contact as well. As the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century draws to a close, migration worldwide is on the rise for a variety of reasons – triggering new contact situations alongside political reactions aimed at both inclusion and isolationism. Shifting geo-economic dominance may complement and reinforce these changes with unprecedented vigor.

Advances in technology will likely push the limits of our analytical capacities well beyond the current state of affairs, be it in the realm of brain studies, cognitive insights, or data processing. As interdisciplinarity becomes the norm, part of the core of language contact research may actually be taken out of linguists' hands. The expected quantum leap in communication technology directed at mass use by the public at large is bound to redefine the very concept of language contact, especially when high-level scholarship and day-to-day-life intertwine in a combination that is anything but science fiction. More dramatically, facts such as climate change will create unprecedented contact situations. Linguists working on these issues may have even moral and ethical roles to play as the anticipated 'ecolinguistic crisis' sets in, with hundreds of now-endangered languages potentially wiped away in coming decades. More broadly, many changes are taking place in society that have and will continue to have impact on language contact as a phenomenon that colors the daily life in many increasingly hybrid speech communities around the globe. We hope that researchers – on the example of Fishman (1991) and others – will contribute to theoretical and empirical foundations to assist speech communities whose languages and whose very existence are threatened.

Judging from the insights and expertise gathered in this volume, we are confident that all concerned are ready to tackle these challenges, and that the shock of the new will not eclipse the knowledge and impact of insights developed in the earlier days of language contact studies proper. In that spirit, we sincerely hope that this handbook may serve as a gateway to language contact research, especially for a younger generation.

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